



## County workers begin levee cleanup

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LOGAN TWP. -- The levee will soon be ready for inspection, but county officials doubt it will make a difference.

On Monday, county public works employees began the task of clearing away the jungle of weeds, shrubs, trees and underbrush that shroud some 600 meters of the flood protection, which guards at least six county towns and 10,000 residents from devastation.

For decades, the four-and-half-mile flood protection system has been in serious disrepair. Built by the long-defunct Repaupo Meadow Company, the system includes two sluice gates and a levee crossing Logan and Greenwich townships, along with Hercules and Dupont property. Freeholder Director Stephen Sweeney has estimated that adequate reparations of the system could cost \$30 million.

The Army Corps of Engineers has denied, on multiple occasions, responsibility for maintaining the system, since they did not build it. According to Bruce Rogers, a Corps scientist, the Corps would be able to insure 80 percent of the cost of repairing the system after it fails, if the 800-plus meters of levee in Logan and Greenwich townships first are cleared of vegetation. Over the years, Rogers said, Hercules, Dupont and to some extent Greenwich have managed to keep their portions of the levee trimmed.

"We're doing this to eliminate the Corps' excuses," said Sweeney. "We've had this problem with the system for decades, and the Corps' response has been that it's the towns' responsibility."

Though the county is using its own workers and equipment to get the task done, Sweeney said the county will be reimbursed by the townships.

"Logan doesn't have the type of public works department to handle this," said County Administrator Jack Fisher. "Greenwich has been able to do some work, but we'll be finishing it up for them."

Fisher said that while he doesn't yet have a final number on the cost of the work, he predicts that Logan will owe about \$2,000 and Greenwich will owe under \$1,000.

Sweeney said that by Friday, the clearing should be complete and the area ready for inspection by the Corps.

According to Sweeney, neither the municipalities nor the county can afford to replace the system.

"I can't say what yet, but we are going to be very aggressive in getting the federal government to pay attention and see that this is a real problem," said Sweeney. "It's not a matter of 'if' this system is going to fail, it's 'when'. It's all well and good that the Corps says they'll insure the system and fix it after it fails, but what's the point in spending the hundreds of millions of dollars to fix it after the fact when they should spend the money to fix it now? That's the problem with government -- you have too many people saying 'this is not my problem'."

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